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ORAL HISTORY

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Address: *Morris F. Carr*
296 W. Haller St.,
East Alton, IL

Date: 5-13-91

Interviewer

Address:

Date:

Date of Accession:

Interviewee

Ray B. Ruel
SLUE

SIUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Summer, 1990-91

Morris Carr Interview, May 13, 1991

Interviewed by Stanley B. Kimball

Filename: CARR.513

Q: My good friend Morris Carr you've been here even longer than I have. You came in January of 1958.

A: Yes.

Q: Why did you come here in the first place?

A: Well, I was working as a business manager at Rich Township High School and we'd had a change of superintendents and I wasn't especially happy with the superintendent that came and I'll tell you who it was, but I don't want it on the record.

Q: All right.

A: Is this all on the record now?

Q: Yes, but remember you get a chance to edit the transcribed account.

A: Yes.

Q: So you can edit it out.

A: Yes. So I had a chance, or thought I had a job over in another school in the Joliet area. It didn't pan out and I stayed on, but I was looking for a job as a business manager and there was some tension in the system that I was in. I was a good friend of Eric Baber the former superintendent of Rich Township High School and he had come down to Southern Illinois University at Alton as the director of the Alton campus.

A: So he invited me down to see him and he lived next to Gene Peebles the business manager here at the Alton campus. You remember Gene.

Q: Yes, I do.

A: And soon after this visit they had an opening and he knew that I was looking for an opportunity to apply my skills and there was an opening for a business officer in the Alton Center and one as a business officer of the East St. Louis Center and he asked me if I was interested. I came down and talked to Gene Peebles and decided that I wanted to come down here and I resigned at the end of 1967 when I came down here.

Q: 1957.

A: '57, yes. And I came down here and started on about the middle of January of '58 and left my family in the little town of Crete, Illinois. It's in Will County. And I had taught there for fifteen years before going over to Park Forest which was a new community and

we started when we went to Park Forest we didn't have a school building. We rented two or three rooms in a church and we had a faculty of ten and our first year we had freshman only.

A: I was at Rich for five and a half years as a business manager before I came here and I had fifteen years as a business teacher and assistant and business manager in the Crete-Monee schools.

Q: You retired in 1979.

A: I retired in 1979. I was sixty-five and I had twenty-one and a half years credited of service with the university, and twenty and a half years of service with the state teachers, and there's reciprocity between the state teachers and the university, so I had forty-two years of service when I was sixty-five.

Q: That's almost all you can get credit for isn't it?

A: It's more than you can get credit for.

Q: I see.

A: In fact I received a rebate on my retirement for two years.

Q: I think the reason that I was so surprised when I saw this 1979 is you've been so active - you've been on campus so much all of those years that I guess it didn't really register that you were actually...

A: Well about five years ago I was asked to become the treasurer of the retiree's organization unit and so I have been on campus quite a bit, but since my amputation, it's harder for me to get on campus. But I am still the treasurer of the retiree's organization.

Q: Why did you stay so long with us?

A: I first started out as the business officer for the Alton campus and I was in charge of the cafeteria, the physical plant, and the we cashed checks and collected fees and I had a student, two student helpers and we were in a very small area in what was in the administration building which was the large building there in the center of the campus. I shared an office with Gene Peebles and we hardly had room to move around in this office.

Q: No wonder you wanted my office.

A: A few months later I got my own office and I had one student that worked mainly on keeping our accounts. All of our accounts at that time, except one, we had to work through Carbondale. I would go to Carbondale about once a month and stay over night and they had a general store there and we had to buy our supplies. They had an auto shop and we had two cars. That was our fleet. We had a 1955 Chevrolet, that was our good car. This was in 1958 and we had a 1953 Ford Carry-all. This was like a little truck. When I would go to Carbondale, generally I would have to take that truck because I would

have to bring back tires or maybe something for the car, school supplies, and all of our accounts were mixed in with theirs, the registrar, the business office.

The only account we had, Dr. See had his own account. And this was largely for the instructors and so about once a month I'd go to Carbondale and probably stay for overnight and be there two days for about the first year of our operation here. And as I said I was in charge of the physical plant, the cafeteria, and the business office, and the bookstore, and we cashed checks for the faculty and staff.

Q: I guess you enjoyed your work and they treated you well because you stayed your major career here.

A: Yes, I did. And I don't know whether you remember or not or maybe this wasn't in effect, but when I first came raises were granted every two years so I was here a year and a half before any raise was given, but I was given a good raise after that first year. And I came for less money than I was receiving at Rich Township High School, but I could see the possibilities of things in the future and I had been in on the ground floor of a school in Park Forest and I was getting in on the ground floor of a university in Southern Illinois.

Q: I presume you felt, like a good many of us, that you were contributing - you were building something.

A: That's right.

Q: A moment ago you mentioned Dr. Harold See. He was one of the reasons I came. He was so enthusiastic and full of dreams. Did he interview you?

A: No, I was interviewed by Gene Peebles and then I did, yes, talk to Dr. See.

Q: When you came here did you get caught up in See's enthusiasm and dreams for this place?

A: Yes, very much so. In fact Dr. See was the first person that I knew that had a telephone in his car and Gene Peebles had a telephone in his car. And Dr. See was apt to call Gene Peebles and others anytime of the day or night, any day of the week. And he expected you to be available. He was a work horse and Gene Peebles was a work horse and I felt like I was a work horse too, but not to the extent that Gene Peebles and Dr. See because they were almost twenty-four hour men, seven days a week.

Q: What do you think happened between See President Delyte Morris anyway?

A:

See was very ambitious and I think maybe that President Morris thought that he was overly ambitious and that he was trying to set up a different school that wouldn't be tied so much to Carbondale. But that's just conjecture and I wouldn't....

Q: Well, I think that's the consensus. That was certainly my opinion that he wanted this to be an independent campus.

A: Yes. Many of us felt that this might be an independent campus.

Q: And I think those of us that were here then still think it ought to be and wish it had become.

Q: What do you consider, Morris, were some of your greatest contributions to the university and the area during the twenty-one years you were here?

A: One of the first things that I had to do, this was after they had acquired the site and were working on the financing of it.

Q: The site at Edwardsville.

A: The site at Edwardsville. When I came it hadn't been decided where the new campus would be and there was conjecture as to maybe Collinsville, somewhere around Edwardsville, even maybe someplace not far from Alton. Of course Edwardsville isn't far from Alton. And the employees and the people in the community were asked to make pledges for the new campus. And I was one of the employees that had made a pledge. But one of my duties was to go around to the various banks in Granite City, Collinsville, East St. Louis, and Edwardsville and pick up the checks or drafts that were for the new campus, so I had a little bit of a hand in working on the finances there in a very small way, but at the start of the campus.

Q: I remember that we commonly called this our War Chest that we were going to use to promote the bond issue so we could get funded.

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: I was assigned Green County. Bruce Brubaker was the general chairman as you remember.

A: Yes.

Q: Is there anything else along this line you'd care to share with us, things you feel particularly good about having accomplished or done?

A: Well, at Alton the Shurtleff campus had been run down quite a little bit and needed a lot of repairs and we had several buildings that needed repairs, but we did not use union workers. We did the work with our own physical plant. We'd knock out walls. We would do the painting and plastering and whatever, put in the equipment that would be needed and make the buildings more usable for our own use.

I recall the Loomis Building which was our fine arts building. And we'd stored a lot of things in the basement, but it was not all excavated and we needed some extra room for storage so John Cook, who was our supervisor there of buildings and grounds, they started digging out under Loomis and some of the brick work fell and I thought we were going to lose Loomis. Fortunately we were able to repair it and build the room and Mrs. Buddemeyer, you recall Mrs. Buddemeyer the art teacher.

Q: Evelyn Budemeyer.

A: She was very much concerned as were all of us because we needed that building and it is the oldest building on campus and one of the important historical sites in the Alton area.

Q: Well and it's still there. Now you mentioned a name that I haven't thought of in thirty years, John Cook.

A: John passed away maybe ten years ago, but he was a very good craftsman. He could do most anything and he would take his workers, - and some of these were student workers, we had two student workers that I'm going to mention. One is John Stevenson who is now a superintendent in - I don't know whether it's Bethalto, but in one of the schools in Worden, and Harry Lutz who later became an employee in Auxiliary Services was in charge of the university cars and the university services, even the cafeteria, textbook rental and so forth. But Harry worked as a student employee.

Q: I remember Harry well.

A: And John was a student employee and they worked in the physical plant and I knew them because I was in charge of the physical plant.

Q: I brought this up again because I want to take this opportunity to record a little story about Cook. I had moved into a rented home that had a sump pump. Well where I came from we didn't have those. I didn't know what a sump pump was. I paid no attention to it.

One Sunday morning the basement was flooding. I didn't know what to do. I just called John Cook and asked what do I do and he came out and he was all dressed up going to church or I don't know where. But he went down and personally right then and there cleaned out my sump pump and told me what to do to prevent this in the future and I have never forgotten that generous gesture on his part. And so I want that to be part of the record.

A: I'll tell you about John. If you went to him with a problem and I had a problem of sewer back up in my backyard and he came out and traced it and opened it up and it was filled with some paper of some kind and Kleenex, I think he said. Kleenex doesn't dissolve like toilet paper. Then I said John I want to pay you. He said you can't pay me that's my contribution. What I give away is what I like to do.

Q: He wouldn't let me pay him either. Real prince.

What have been some of the your greatest satisfactions around here Morris.

A: I think one of the greatest satisfaction probably was after the new campus was built we I was transferred to Alton taking the place of Brubaker who was coordinator of the Alton general office. Bruce moved to the vice-presidents office. At the time that the Alton campus was in full operation and you will recall this. You couldn't find a place to park, you couldn't find an office. We had students running out our ears, but when I came to Alton the new campus had

opened and we only had about 4 or 500 students in Alton and we were closing buildings. People were still moving to Edwardsville. Some of them had not moved everything and we were closing buildings.

Then in about 1968, they started to or perhaps a little earlier, thinking in terms of a dental school for Southern Illinois University. It was decided that it would be in Alton and in the summer of 1969, my wife and I took a trip around the world and we were gone for 7 weeks. While we were gone they hired a dean for the dental school, Dr. Subkowski and Dean Subkowski used my secretary until just before I got back and then he interviewed for secretaries and employed a secretary and started to work on the nucleus of the dental school. I believe that our first class in the dental school started in about 1972.

It took 2 or 3 years of planning and I was in on a lot of the facilities, planning. Our general office was responsible for the collection of fees, the issuing of textbooks for the business office and we had the ditto machines and the IBM copy machines in the general office and my secretary, Mary Malone, was a real asset to the dental school. And she is now working for Dr. Thomas Nelson, chair of one of the departments at the dental school.

Q: So you feel a real part of the dental school and having got it started?

A: In fact I was three-fourths, my salary was three-fourths in the dental school and one-fourth in the school of business. I taught three courses a year in the school of business in management.

Q: What were some of your greatest frustrations around here?

A: One of the greatest frustrations was when I came to SIU was the difficulty and the red tape in getting supplies and equipment. I had been business manager at Park Forest High School and if the items were in the budget I could go ahead and order them. Of course the big items we would take bids on them and so forth. But paper and mimeograph supplies and ordinary supplies and food for the cafeteria we didn't have to requisition this. We just bought it locally. But when I came to the university, and a lot of others realized this to, we had to fill out requisitions, we had a purchase order. You might have wanted a certain type of equipment, but that wasn't necessarily the one that purchasing would recommend. If an item was of like quality, they took bids on the bigger priced items and it was often quite some time before you got your equipment or supplies and this was frustrating not only to me but to the professors and civil service people and anyone that wanted things.

Q: I was one of those professors that you mentioned. One time in Alton I wanted to buy a few supplies at the uptown Ben Franklin store and so I did. I took my receipts to Harry Lutz, whom you mentioned a few moments ago, and I quickly found out that universities do not have a petty cash fund.

A: That's right.

Q: And so I complained to Harry. I said Harry it will cost you more to process the paperwork that I spent. He said yes I know but that's the system and so...

A: Where I was before we had a petty cash fund. There are problems with petty cash funds to. We had no petty cash.

Q: All right. Morris that's a frustration all right. It's one we all lived with. Any others?

A: We all found this frustration when we were at Alton finding a place to park.

Q: Yes I remember that. I think you have mentioned this, but this early dependence on Carbondale. Must have been very frustrating to have to..

A: Yes it was and time consuming but this was only the first two or three years that we did work very closely with Carbondale. In fact they'd send a plane up to get us at Bethalto airport and we would fly down and about once a month we had a meeting of the main business official here and at East St. Louis with the Carbondale business. And the chairmen of that was John Rendlemen who later became the chancellor.

Q: President and then chancellor here?

A: Yes.

Q: You mentioned the plane. There are all kinds of jokes about that. Delyte W. Morris Air Force. I flew back and forth a time or two myself. We were supposed to have had a landing field here in Edwardsville down on the flood plain, but that got cut somewhere along the line and I think that Morris lost most of his air force anyway. (mixed voices). Excuse me go ahead.

A: Go ahead.

Q: How about let's get off on memories here.

A: I have another frustration that I would...

Q: Good let's get it.

A: I was over in East St. Louis for 6 months and I took while I was there I took Lauren Jung's place, was the coordinator of the graduation in case it rained. Someone else was in charge of the graduation planning, but I inherited that and somehow or other when I moved to Alton that went with me. So we would plan with the Edwardsville High School on what we were going to do in case of rain and told Gene Peebles and president Rendlemen said that if we are ever rained out, I said we will never try to hold a graduation again.

Well lo and behold we were rained out one evening in Edwardsville and it was bedlam. We had the exercises ,but a lot of people couldn't get in and some of the graduating students had trouble getting in and getting a seat and they had to cut the

exercise short. I had suggested even before the rain out that if we had a rain or rain was predicted that each school conduct there own graduation exercise.

A few years later we were rained out again and each school conducted their own graduation exercise on the Edwardsville campus and it worked out better. Of course there's no good way of getting all of the group together, but it would be impossible to put them in a small, relatively small, auditorium for the size of our graduating classes.

Q: You may remember that in the good 'ol days we used to say Morris would never let it rain.

A: Yes.

Q: On commencement, and it seldom ever did.

A: I can only recall twice that we had the rain but I remember specifically the one at the Edwardsville High School and of the agony that we went through and I probably went through more than anyone else because it was on my shoulders.

Q: Now to come back a moment how about sharing some of your most pleasant memories around here over twenty some odd years.

A: Well one of my pleasant memories was the ground breaking for the new campus and I was there. I've had many, many friends at the university and when I did retire they gave me a big party at the faculty club. President Ken Shaw was there and gave me a nice

plaque, picture taken with President Shaw and others from the business division, the Alton general office. They also threw a nice party for me at the dental school.

I enjoy coming back on campus, although each time I come back there are less people that I know, but I always run into some old friends.

Q: Generally me, I'm glad to say.

A: Yes, and the word "old" you take that to mean two ways. But I just enjoyed my work at SIU and when I retired I could have stayed on but I had my years in and I liked my work and it's always more fun to retire when you have a sort of feeling that you're on top and everything's going fine and there's no pressure to retire.

Q: What was your last official position Morris?

A: I was coordinator of the Alton general office and instructor in the School of Business. After I retired I was made Assistant Professor Emeritus.

And so I felt that I had good rapport with the faculty and with the civil service and for three years I was in charge of the personnel office. I was director of personnel for three years. So there's not many, there's only one in the personnel office that was there when I was there and that's Sue Paul.

Q: Was that on this campus or in Alton?

A: No that was in Edwardsville.

Q: At Edwardsville.

A: Yes.

Q: Now approaching some of the things we have talked about. Let's try a little different angle. How about some of your worst memories?

A: Well I mentioned the graduation...

Q: All right. Okay so we've covered that in frustration.

A: ...and the parking problems at Alton. Actually I don't have many real frustrating things that were lasting. I mean you have some frustrations that you get over or you find that you can work within the system, like we were talking about the requisitions and so forth.

Q: A few humorous things you remember over the years.

A: Well I don't know that I would call this humorous, but it was. When I would come to the Edwardsville campus Jerry Runkle and others had a room over in Peck where they played Bridge...

Q: Yes.

A: And I would quite often come over on days that I was teaching and on days that I'd have to come almost everyday and play some Bridge during the noon hour. And there were several that played Bridge - Jerry Runkle, Leo Cohen ...

Q: Herb Rosenthal.

A: Herb Rosenthal.

Q: Stuart Weiss.

A: Yes, Stuart Rice. Bob Cambell, and well there were several. And Jerry Runkle kept a record of the wins and the losses and so that was not humorous, but pleasant and something a little different.

Q: I remember, that room is still there. It's seldom used anymore, but I remember how - oh, another one was Don Taylor.

A: Oh yes.

Q: But those guys were serious, that was serious business with them.

Well, Morris, we've had an official history written of this university. David Butler wrote a ten year history of SIUE. It was an official history and of course he had to be careful. What would you care to record for posterity that probably would never be in an official history, some other unusual or important events that might come to your mind you feel should be recorded somewhere.

A: Well I really don't recall anything that might be in the official history. I'm sure that there's something in there about the opening of the dental school and the first graduation and that was a very important milestone in the university.

Q: Were you involved in relating the university to the community - to explaining us or integrating us with the community? Did you ever do anything like that?

A: No, I was not involved in the relating.

Q: But you did generally teach one class a quarter in the School of Business.

A: Yes.

Q: Well let me ask a question that I've thought about often and I think the answer is positive, but over the years did you get any evidence that as our graduates went out into the community at large - perhaps teaching, working in the school systems, do you think we got better students as a result of that?

A: Oh I feel that we did, yes. It became known in the area that the graduates from our Edwardsville campus were well prepared and have made a contribution to the community. I, just a little off the record, but I went to a state teachers meeting last Tuesday I think it was and one of the featured speakers was Ed Hightower who is a principal of one of the schools in Alton. Ed is a black person who

has become renowned as a referee and he refereed college games and some of the professional games and he's a very fine person. He got his training at SIU, his bachelors, masters, and final degree. What's the top degree that they give here?

Q: Well we can give a masters in education.

A: Well, he has his masters and...I thought we had a degree above that.

Q: Yes. Through Carbondale we can issue a doctorate.

A: Yes. Well he received all his degrees from Edwardsville. He spoke to some two hundred retired elementary and high school teachers and I belong to that organization too. In fact Leonard Van Camp sang a solo, or solos, at this meeting so ...

Q: Morris tell us a little bit about the Mylan Smyers Retirement Organization?

A: Yes. Did you know Mylan Smyers?

Q: A little.

A: Well Mylan was in the field of education and I called him Smilin' Mylan, but I knew him quite well. And when they first started their retirement organization, he was the first president, I'm not exactly sure how many years ago it was. I think seventeen

eighteen years ago. But they decided to name it for Mylan Smyers who had passed away. I believe that he was still teaching when he passed away. But they decided to call it the Mylan Smyers Chapter of the SUAA. That's the State University Annuitant's Association, faculty members and civil service people, all university employees age fifty-five and over and retirees are eligible for membership.

And I have been the treasurer for about five or six years. And it's a big job, but I have enjoyed it. I considered giving it up when I had my surgery but it's one of the things that I felt that I could still do and I am still the treasurer.

Q: When you retire do you automatically become a member or do you have to join?

A: You have to join. There's a membership fee of twelve dollars. And eight dollars of this goes to the state organization and four is kept by our local for our meeting expense, postage. We promote legislation for the retirees. In fact you probably have been reading, - if you read today's paper, you'll find out that the state is in very bad shape and one of the place that they have been cutting back on is funding of the retirement systems, not only ours, but the other systems.

And if they keep going at the rate that they are going in thirty years or so it's going, the retirement system isn't going to be there. So we've been pecking at the legislators and they even passed legislation under Governor Thompson to increase the amount the state

pays into the fund, but they haven't increased it. They passed the legislation. Did you receive a letter from the state office just recently?

Q: Yes.

A: Well you read this information in there but we have a good retirement system. We have a good insurance system. You know that you life insurance now has gone from \$2,000 to \$5,000. And this is another reason why people like to get into the university system. We have a very good retirement system. We have about almost 400 paid members. Quite a few of them are employees, spouses eligible and, of course, you know that in case of the employee or the retiree, if he passes away his spouse takes his place in the insurance area. And of course there is a monthly payment to this spouse.

Q: I'm old enough now where I am beginning to pay attention to this and I appreciate what you have done. Are we going to be seeing you on campus occasionally now in the future as we have?

A: I hope so.

Q: I do to and I do hope you will come by and talk to me about all that office space I have.

A: This office?

Q: Is there anything else that you would like to add, Morris, to this?

A: The only thing is that I am proud to be a retiree from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville and I love to come back.

Q: I can't think of a higher note to stop on than that. So thanks Morris so much for coming out. And I will look forward to seeing you. I hope I never realize that you have retired. So ~~thanks~~.

A: You bet.

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